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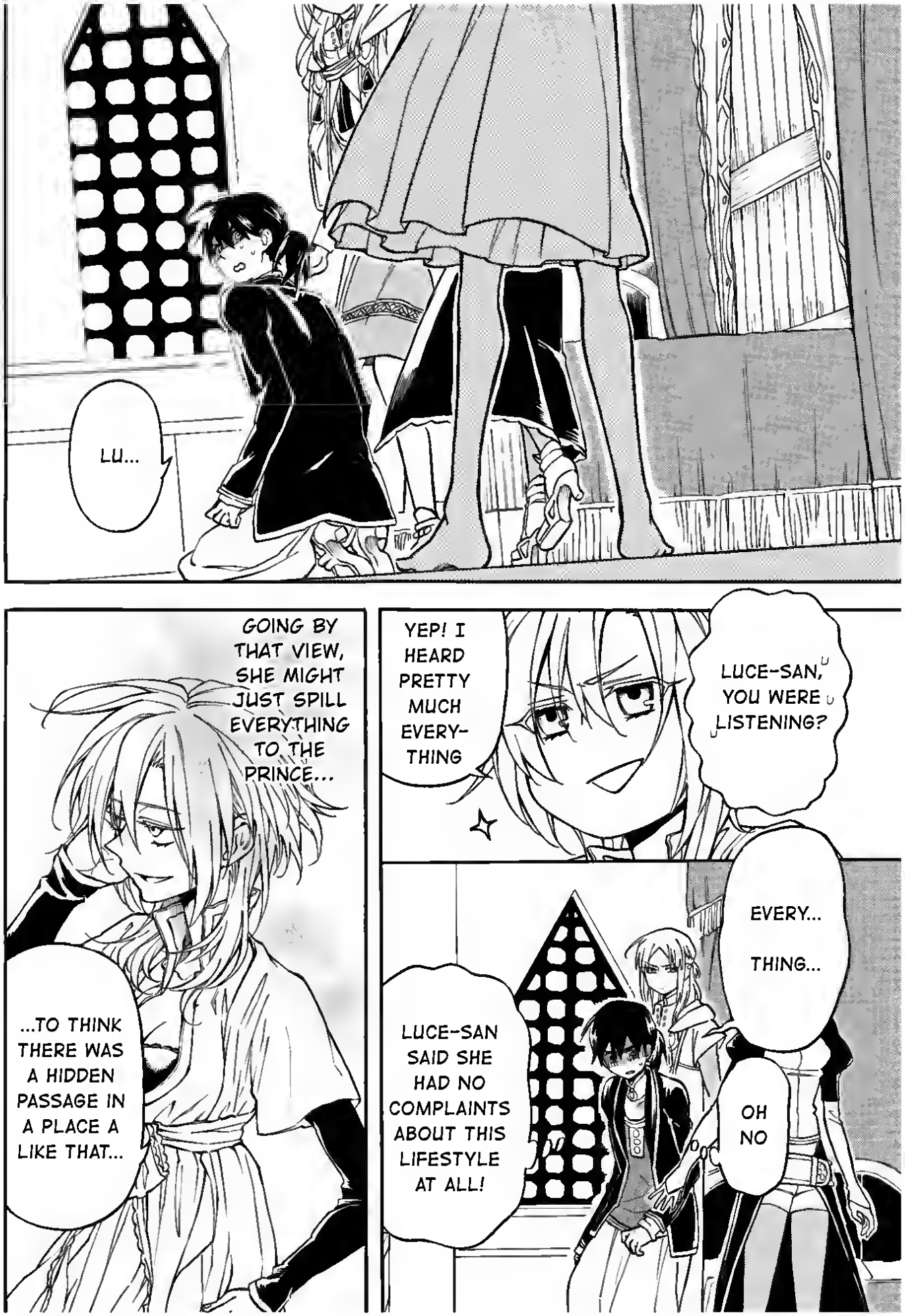
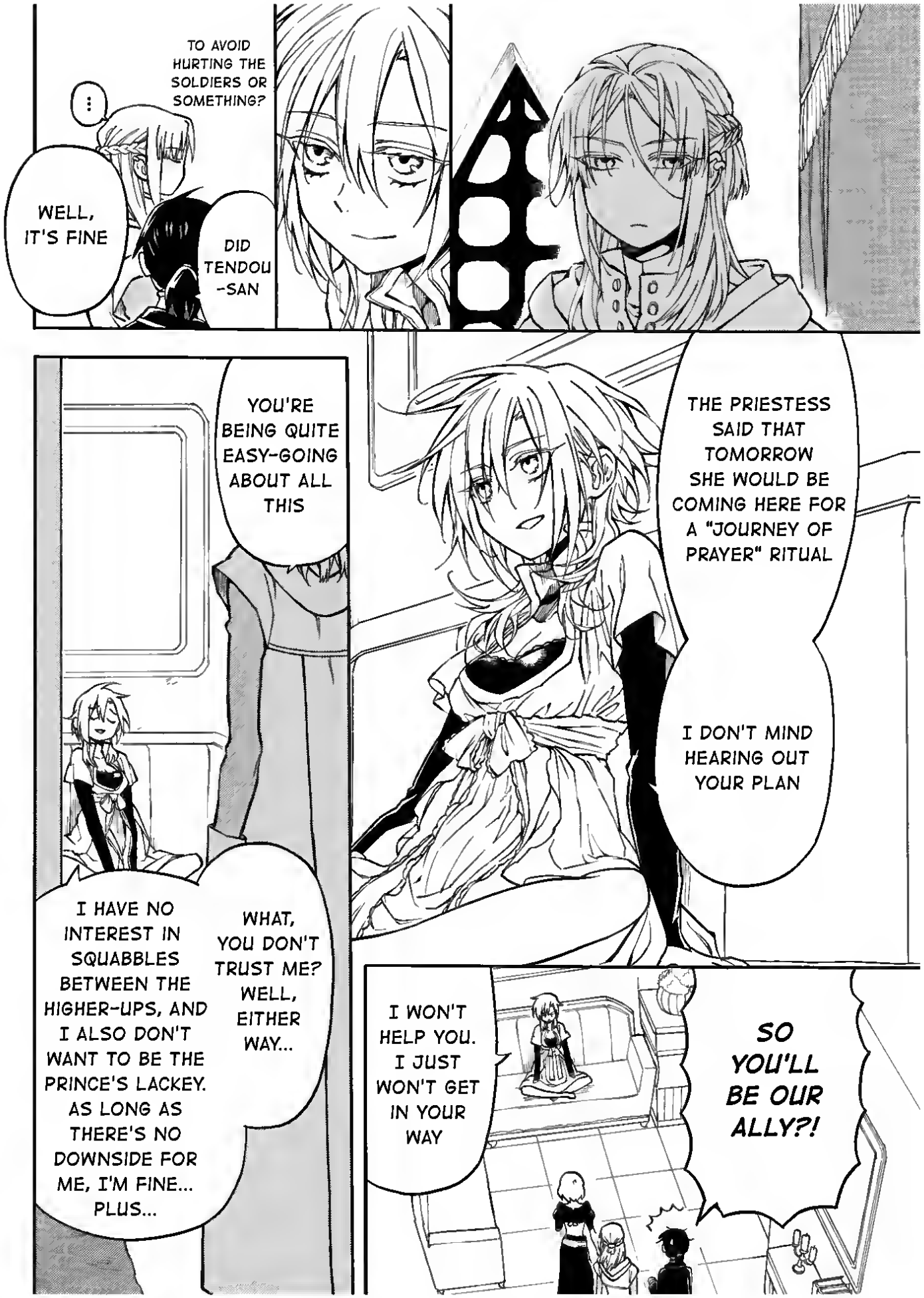
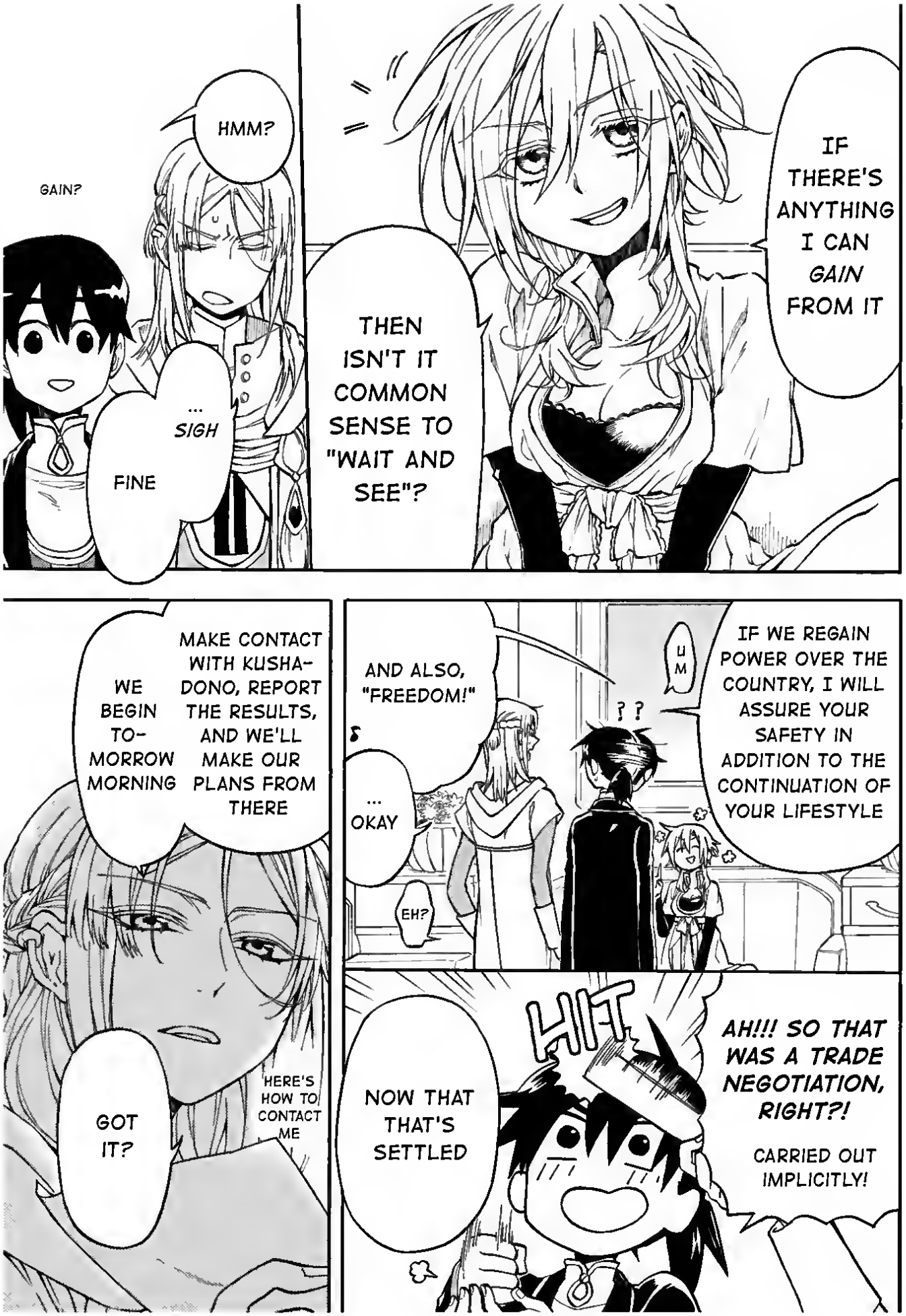
CHAPTER
12


LU...
LUCE-SAN, YOU WERE LISTENING?
YEP! I HEARD PRETTY MUCH EVERY-THING
EVERY...
THING...
OH NO
LUCE-SAN SAID SHE HAD NO COMPLAINTS ABOUT THIS LIFESTYLE AT ALL!
GOING BY THAT VIEW, SHE MIGHT JUST SPILL EVERYTHING TO THE PRINCE...
...TO THINK THERE WAS A HIDDEN PASSAGE IN A PLACE A LIKE THAT...

PLOP
BUT YOU GUYS KNEW ABOUT IT AND YOU EVEN CAME THROUGH IT
AND THE PRINCE GAVE US THIS ROOM HIMSELF, SO HE PROBABLY HAD NO IDEA ABOUT IT
HUH?
Y... YEAH THAT'S TRUE
AH!
AH! THAT'S-
WAIT, IT'S BECAUSE MASTER'S A MAGIC USER, BUT MAYBE I SHOULDN'T GIVE HER TOO MUCH INFORMATION...
BECAUSE LUCE-SAN MIGHT NOT ALREADY KNOW...
TRUE..
I WONDER WHAT KIND OF EVENTS THEY TRIGGERED TO GET HERE...
YES THAT IS SO
A PASSAGE HIDDEN FROM EVEN THE ROYALS .. MAYBE EXILED ROYALS, OR A CASTLE BLUEPRINT, OR..?
COMPLETELY UNARMED?
SOMEONE TOLD US THAT WE HAD NO NEED TO BE
.....


TO AVOID HURTING THE SOLDIERS OR SOMETHING?
...
WELL, IT'S FINE
DID TENDOU-SAN
YOU'RE BEING QUITE EASY-GOING ABOUT ALL THIS
THE PRIESTESS SAID THAT TOMORROW SHE WOULD BE COMING HERE FOR A "JOURNEY OF PRAYER" RITUAL
I DON'T MIND HEARING OUT YOUR PLAN
I HAVE NO INTEREST IN SQUABBLES BETWEEN THE HIGHER-UPS, AND I ALSO DON'T WANT TO BE THE PRINCE'S LACKEY. AS LONG AS THERE'S NO DOWNSIDE FOR ME, I'M FINE... PLUS...
WHAT, YOU DON'T TRUST ME? WELL, EITHER WAY...
I WON'T HELP YOU. I JUST WON'T GET IN YOUR WAY
SO YOU'LL BE OUR ALLY?!


IF THERE'S ANYTHING I CAN GAIN FROM IT
THEN ISN'T IT COMMON SENSE TO "WAIT AND SEE"?
HMM?
GAIN?
... SIGH
FINE
IF WE REGAIN POWER OVER THE COUNTRY, I WILL ASSURE YOUR SAFETY IN ADDITION TO THE CONTINUATION OF YOUR LIFESTYLE
UM
? ?
AND ALSO, "FREEDOM!"
... OKAY
EH?
MAKE CONTACT WITH KUSHA-DONO, REPORT THE RESULTS, AND WE'LL MAKE OUR PLANS FROM THERE
WE BEGIN TO-MORROW MORNING
HERE'S HOW TO CONTACT ME
GOT IT?
HIT
NOW THAT THAT'S SETTLED
AH!!! SO THAT WAS A TRADE NEGOTIATION, RIGHT?!
CARRIED OUT IMPLICITLY!

WHAT?!
OH, AND WE ALREADY TOLD ROSWALD AND THE OTHERS ALL ABOUT YOU
WE'LL RETIRE FOR NOW
GULP...
A-ABOUT ME BEING THE... SHADOW MAIDEN?!
OF COURSE WE DID, LOOK AT THE SITUATION WE'RE IN
I BELIEVE THIS WAY THEY CAN GIVE YOU THE PROPER SUPPORT AND FOLLOW UP WHEN YOU TAKE ACTION
.....!
BUT DON'T TAKE THAT FOR GRANTED
YOU'RE THE ONE WHO "STARTED" ALL THIS
DO YOUR DUT-
NO...

LOOKS LIKE YOU'RE MOTI-VATED NOW, HUH?
EVEN THOUGH YOU WERE JUST WHINING ABOUT HOW IT WAS IMPOSSIBLE
DO YOUR BEST
STARE...
CLACK
BUT I'M ALREADY SO SCARED THAT I WANT TO QUIT, SO DON'T SAY IT!!!
I WAS HAPPY, OKAY?!
WAH!!!
ONLY A FEW MINUTES SINCE THEY LEFT AND YOU'RE ALREADY REGRETTING IT? THAT WAS FAST...
OH, MY BAD
YOU GOT OUT OF BEING RESPONSIBLE SO NOW YOU'RE FEELING TOTALLY REFRESHED, EH?
NO, I'M NOT THE ONE WHO'LL BE DOING MOST OF IT, SO...
I'M JUST HELPING OUT
...OF COURSE, I DO UNDERSTAND THAT MY JOB IS VERY IMPORTANT AND INTEGRAL TO... THE PLAN...
UUH...

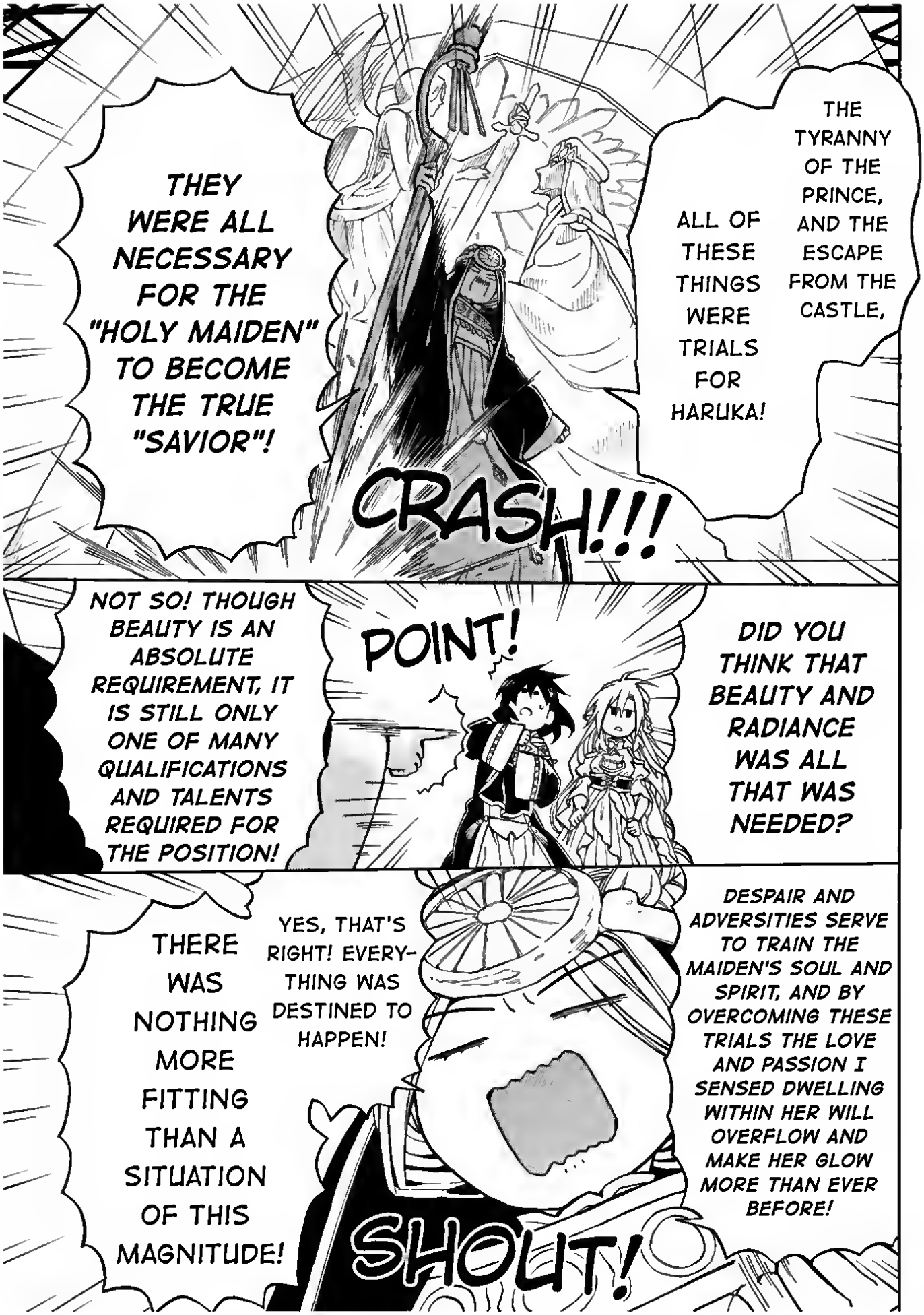
STAND
I HAVE NO QUALMS ABOUT IT, BUT I'M NOT PARTICULARLY ATTACHED TO IT, EITHER
PIT PAT
IT'S LIKE, EITHER WAY IS FINE BY ME
:
BUT WHAT ABOUT YOU, LUCE-SAN? ARE YOU ALRIGHT WITH THIS?
YOU'LL BECOME A TRAITOR IF YOU STAY QUIET, AND I THOUGHT YOU LIKED THIS LIFE-STYLE...
SO IN THAT CASE...
FLOP
I FIGURED, "WHY NOT PLAY FAVORITES?"
I'M NOT GONNA RISK MY LIFE
BUT I THINK I'D RATHER HELP YOU THAN THE PRINCE
PLAY FAVORITES...?
BUT YOU'VE NEVER EVEN MET TENDOU-SAN...
HEHE, JUST KIDDING!
GRIN
AH!
PRETTY

LUCE-SAN, YOU HAVE A THING FOR OLDER GUYS?
YOU PREFER THEM OVER YOUNGER ONES?
HUH? HOW DID YOU GET ON THAT TOPIC?
I MEAN YOUR-
?
AH! YOU LIKE PRETTY PEOPLE TOO! LIKE ME!
WOOHOO!!
WELL, ANYWAY, YOUR BIG PROBLEM IS TOMORROW
I'VE HEARD RUMORS ABOUT THIS BLACK-HEARTED PRIESTESS, KUSHA YUURE!
JUST LETTING YOU KNOW NOW, I'M NOT GONNA HELP YOU
I KNOW ...
I HATE CHARACTERS THAT GET COLD FEET AND RUN AWAY FROM A JOB THEY ACCEPTED, SO YOU CAN COUNT ON ME TO STICK IT THROUGH
AH, I HATE THOSE KINDS OF PEOPLE TOO
KUSHA-SAN, HUH...
IT DOESN'T SEEM LIKE SHE'S EVEN MADE A MOVE TO HELP TENDOU-SAN, SO MAYBE SHE'S ALREADY ON THE PRINCE'S SIDE...
IF THAT'S THE CASE, THEN ...
AM I REALLY THE RIGHT PERSON FOR THIS?
ROAR

I WILL GO DEAL WITH IT
PLEASE WAIT INSIDE THE TEMPLE
THAT MUST BE MASTER ...
NOD, NOD
AN INTRUDER ...?
BOOM
ROAR
BAM
WHA-?!
WHOA
THAT FELT GROSS!
WHAT THE HECK?!
LUCE-SAN! YOUR SPEECH!
I USED MAGIC TO PUT UP A FILM
ROYAL GUARD
DARN SOL-DIER
SLIP
!!?
STARTLE
NOW OUR VOICES WILL NOT LEAK OUTSIDE
A SIMPLE ROYAL GUARD CANNOT MATCH MY POWER, SO HE WILL NOT SUSPECT A THING

SINCE THE PRINCE IS CONVENIENTLY ABSENT, I THOUGHT IT WOULD BE A GOOD TIME TO TALK
ABOUT YOUR PRESENT SITUATION, THAT IS
I WONDER, HOW LONG HAS IT BEEN SINCE WE WERE ABLE TO TALK LIKE THIS? OH, BUT...
I SUPPOSE I WAS THE ONE WHO THREW YOU OUT IN THE FIRST PLACE
OH NO... I'M STARTING TO GET STRANGELY NERVOUS...
UNMASK
WHAT SHOULD I SAY? WHERE DO I BEGIN...
I GUESS I SHOULD START OFF BY CONFIRMING WHOSE SIDE SHE'S ON...
CALM DOWN, CALM DOWN...
...UM, ACTUALLY I ALSO HAD SOMETHING I WANTED TO TALK ABOUT...

TEN-
I ACCEPT
ABOUT TO SAY "DOU" →
HUH?
I SAID, I ACCEPT
YOU'VE MADE CONTACT WITH CHIEF MAGICIAN MIVA-DONO, CORRECT?
THAT'S WHAT IT SEEMED LIKE
YOU WERE GOING TO TELL ME ABOUT HIS REINSTATEMENT PLAN AFTER IT'S ALL OVER AND DONE WITH, RIGHT?
I ALSO BELIEVE IT TO BE A SUITABLE TIME, SO I AM NOT OPPOSED TO COOPERATING
WH...WHAT? BUT WEREN'T YOU OBEYING NETIKA-SAMA...
THIS IS GOING WAY TOO SMOOTHLY!
I WAS MERELY WATCHING AND WAITING
DO YOU UNDERSTAND?
GLEAM
TURN


THE TYRANNY OF THE PRINCE, AND THE ESCAPE FROM THE CASTLE,
ALL OF THESE THINGS WERE TRIALS FOR HARUKA!
THEY WERE ALL NECESSARY FOR THE "HOLY MAIDEN" TO BECOME THE TRUE "SAVIOR"!
CRASH!!!
DID YOU THINK THAT BEAUTY AND RADIANCE WAS ALL THAT WAS NEEDED?
POINT!
NOT SO! THOUGH BEAUTY IS AN ABSOLUTE REQUIREMENT, IT IS STILL ONLY ONE OF MANY QUALIFICATIONS AND TALENTS REQUIRED FOR THE POSITION!
DESPAIR AND ADVERSITIES SERVE TO TRAIN THE MAIDEN'S SOUL AND SPIRIT, AND BY OVERCOMING THESE TRIALS THE LOVE AND PASSION I SENSED DWELLING WITHIN HER WILL OVERFLOW AND MAKE HER GLOW MORE THAN EVER BEFORE!
YES, THAT'S RIGHT! EVERY-THING WAS DESTINED TO HAPPEN!
THERE WAS NOTHING MORE FITTING THAN A SITUATION OF THIS MAGNITUDE!
SHOUT!

I FEEL LIKE WE'RE PRETTY SIMILAR
I'VE BEEN THINKING THIS SINCE WAY BACK, BUT...
I LEFT HER ALONE INTENTIONALLY
DO YOU UNDERSTAND NOW?
TAP
NO, IT'S NOT OVER YET. I STILL HAVE TO USE MY POWER AT THE MAIN EVENT...
GOOD JOB!
WELL, AT LEAST I COMPLETED MY ROLE AND MISSION...
PHEW...
OH MAN... SO THERE WAS NO NEED TO TRY TO PERSUADE YOU
OH, YEAH... SHE'S PROBABLY STILL HURT...
SO I'M JUST PASSING ON THE MESSAGE
HUH?
INDEED. I ALSO PREDICTED THAT YOU WOULD COME TRY TO CONTACT ME

I WONDER IF WE CAN BE FRIENDS AGAIN IF I DO ALL OF THIS PROPERLY...
...I DON'T KNOW HOW TO HANDLE FIGHTS...
AS I THOUGHT... I REALLY SHOULD TELL YOU THIS
BUT, AT FIRST-
RIGHT. IN THE BEGINNING, I WAS UNSURE WHICH OF YOU POSSESSED THAT TRAIT
(SO I CHOSE THE BEAUTIFUL ONE)
AND THAT IS BECAUSE
THAT IS WHY IT WAS NOT POSSIBLE FOR MY CHOICE TO BE INCORRECT
THE REASON I THOUGHT HARUKA-SAMA WAS THE HOLY MAIDEN WAS NOT "BECAUSE SHE WAS BEAUTIFUL"
THE PRIEST IS ACTUALLY ABLE TO SEE THE POWER OF GOD DWELLING INSIDE THE MAIDEN'S BODY
EH?!
I NEVER HEARD!

YOU ALSO HAD THE POWER OF GOD DWELLING IN YOU. IN FACT, YOU WERE FILLED TO THE BRIM
WHAT?!
BUT THAT WAS NOT QUITE RIGHT
YOUR GODLY POWER
HAS A LIMIT
AND WHAT'S MORE
YOU HAVE ALMOST RUN OUT
IN YOUR CASE, YOU ARE NOT CONSTANTLY CONNECTED WITH THE HEAVENS LIKE HARUKA-SAMA IS
YOU WERE MERELY USING THE POWER THAT WAS GIVEN TO YOU AT THE START
SO IT SHOULD BE A GIVEN THAT YOU ARE RUNNING OUT, CONSIDERING HOW MANY STRONG WEAPONS YOU'VE BEEN MATERIAL-IZING

SHE'LL "RETURN"?! WHAT?!
SHE IS JUST AN ABERRATION TO BEGIN WITH
IF HER ONLY CONNECTION TO THIS WORLD IS LOST, THAT IS THE INEVITABLE RESULT. THAT IS WHY I TOLD YOU NOT TO GET INVOLVED WITH ANYTHING
THOUGH I STILL EARNESTLY BELIEVE THAT THERE SHOULD BE ONLY ONE REVERED HOLY MAIDEN
BUT THE MOST IMPORTANT THING TO NOTE IS THAT THAT POWER IS THE REASON YOU ARE ABLE TO STAY CONNECTED TO THIS WORLD
IN OTHER WORDS, ONCE THAT POWER IS EXHAUSTED, YOU WILL RETURN TO YOUR ORIGINAL WORLD
HM-
WHAT?!
YOU SAID EARLIER THAT YOU WERE GOING TO USE YOUR POWER FOR THE PLAN, BUT IT DOESN'T LOOK LIKE YOU CAN PRODUCE MUCH MORE. WELL, AT LEAST TRY NOT TO TROUBLE ANYONE BY QUITTING WITHOUT WARNING...
HOLD ON A SEC, I DEFINITELY NEED A SAY HERE...
WELL, HOLD ON... FIRST OFF, WHAT THE HECK IS UP WITH THAT?!
WHY DIDN'T YOU TELL US THAT SOONER?!
I HAD NO DUTY TO DO SO
I ALWAYS FELT IT WOULD BE BETTER IF SHE WEREN'T HERE
HEY!
THAT'S NOT COOL! YOU KNOW AT THAT OTHER BATTLE, IF SHE HADN'T BEEN HERE...
HM, YOU WERE PART OF THE PRINCE'S PLAN, WERE YOU NOT? WELL... IT WAS SHREWD, BUT NOW THAT YOU HAVE NEITHER THE POWER OF GOD, NOR MAGIC, YOU CAN NO LONGER PORTRAY THE MIKO. IN FACT, IT'S A WONDER HOW YOU GOT BY UNTIL NOW...
THAT DOESN'T MATTER!
RETURN..?
TO MY OWN WORLD..?

IT'S NOT LIKE I DON'T WANT TO GO BACK
IF I KNEW THE WAY BACK, THAT WOULD BE JUST FINE
BUT...
I JUST REALIZED I HAVEN'T BEEN THINKING ABOUT THAT AT ALL
I WONDER WHY... I GUESS I JUST NEVER HAD THE TIME TO THINK ABOUT IT...
I FINALLY GOT THE MOTIVATION TO DO STUFF
I THOUGHT, "I CAN BE USEFUL!"
BUT IT ENDED UP LIKE THIS...
HA!
I'M A REAL PIECE OF JUNK...
SO I'M USELESS AT SUCH A CRUCIAL POINT...
BANG
AUGH!
OW!
Enough!
QUIT IT!
THAT KIND OF TALK IS SO IRRITATING!
BALANCE BREAKER!

YOU'RE GONNA RUN OUT NO MATTER WHAT YOU DO, SO JUST MAKE DO SOMEHOW!
IF YOU'VE GOT TIME TO PUTZ AROUND, THEN JUST GO TELL THAT GIRLY GUY YOU DON'T HAVE ENOUGH POWER!
YOU'RE SO ANNOYING!
LUCE-SAN...
YOU MEAN MASTER?
YEAH...
SORRY...
I'VE BEEN WORTH-LESS FROM THE START
SHE'S RIGHT, IT'S NOTHING NEW AFTER ALL...
...REMEMBER THE FIRST SWORD YOU CREATED? YOU CAN DO ANOTHER TWO OR THREE OF THOSE
BUT EVEN THEN, I STILL HAVE TO FIND A WAY!
STAND
UM, SO EXACTLY HOW MUCH IS LEFT..?
THERE'S PROBABLY ENOUGH TO DO THAT MUCH...
SEE?!
.....

BOOM
THEY'RE HEADING FOR THE TEMPLE!
DON'T LET THEM PASS!
JOLT
IT'S THE INTRUD-ER!
STOP HIM!
HEY!
THIS COMMOTION ...IS IT MASTER?!
WAIT, BUT...
HE'S NEARBY?
TURN
I'M GOING TO GO CHECK!
EVEN IF HE WAS LURED HERE, THERE'S NO WAY HE WOULD COME SO CLOSE!
DASH
IF HE'S HEADING HERE, THEN THAT MEANS SOMETHING WENT WRONG!
WHERE ...
AH! HEYYY! SATOKI!
HEY, WHAT- AH!
BAM
UH OH!
WAAAH!

SUR-
PRISE
AH, GE-EZ!
ACCIDEN-TALLY FIRED A SHOT!
MY BAD, MY BAD! MESSED UP A LITTLE!
YOU OK?
WHAT DO YOU THINK? I WANTED TO SHOW YOU FIRST!
THE NEWEST FANG HOWL CANNON
PANT
SO, YEAH! I DECIDED THAT I'M GONNA FIGHT YOU GUYS NEXT! AND I'M GONNA BRING A TON OF THESE BABIES WITH ME, SO BE THERE OR BE SQUARE, GOT IT?
PANT
PANT
THE REST ARE STRONG TOO, OK?

I GUESS IT WAS REFLEX, THOUGH...
ARE YOU GONNA HAVE ENOUGH POWER AFTER THAT...?
SATOKI!
HEY... SATOKI...
ALSO THAT THING IS COOL!
IT DIDN'T BUDGE AN INCH!
YEAH, THAT'S THE LEVEL I WANT TO FIGHT AT!
FSSS
AS A DISGUISE?
WHY DO YOU LOOK LIKE A TEMPLE GUARD?
MASTER?!
WHOAA!
WHERE'D YOU GET THOSE CLOTHES?!
THIS WAS THE BEST WAY TO HIDE MY FACE
QUIET, YOU IDIOT!
LET'S GO INSIDE THE TEMPLE FOR NOW. WERE YOU ABLE TO CONVINCE HER?
THE PLACE IS IN CHAOS BECAUSE OF OBDIMA, SO I DECIDED IT WAS A GOOD OPPORTUNITY TO CHECK UP ON YOU
UM, WELL
SEEMS LIKE HE JUST APPEARED RANDOMLY
CHATTER
DON'T LET HIM GET AWAY!
SURROUND HIM!
ARE YOU ALRIGHT?

GOOD WORK, MIVA-DONO. YOUR PLAN WAS WONDERFULLY POINTLESS
AND YES, I'M OK WITH YOU
KUSHA-DONO... WHAT DO YOU MEAN BY "POINTLESS"?
IT SEEMS YOU THOUGHT IT NECESSARY TO SEND HER TO PERSUADE ME, HOPING THAT WE COULD ALSO MAKE PEACE
FOR THE SAKE OF THE PLAN
HOWEVER, SHE IS NO LONGER OF ANY USE
ONLY A MOMENT HAS PASSED SINCE I WARNED HER, AND IT'S ALREADY HAPPENED...
FOR GOODNESS' SAKE!
HEY!
AH!
WAIT, DON'T TELL HIM
UGH
SHE HAS NO POWER OF GOD LEFT IN HER
SHE USED A GREAT DEAL OF IT JUST NOW
SHE CAN PROBABLY ONLY MAKE ONE MORE ORDINARY SWORD ABOUT THIS SIZE
THEN HER POWER WILL RUN OUT AND SHE WILL BE EXPELLED OUT OF THIS WORLD
AND SHE WILL RETURN TO HER OWN WORLD

SHE'S TOTALLY RIGHT...
WHY DON'T WE JUST HAVE HER USE UP ALL HER POWER RIGHT HERE AND SEND HER HOME NOW?
WH-
BASICALLY, SHE CAN NO LONGER DO ANYTHING TO HELP WITH THE REINSTATEMENT PLAN OR RAISE THE SPIRITS OF THE PEOPLE
IN FACT, SHE WILL PROBABLY BE A HINDRANCE
WHAAAT?!
WHAT'S WRONG WITH YOU?! I HATE YOU!
THAT'S RIGHT
START
GO BACK
HMM?

ONLY ONE CHAPTER TO GO. I PROBABLY WON'T WRITE ANYTHING ON THAT ONE SO THIS IS MY LAST CHANCE. IT'S BEEN CURIOUS: BOTH A LONGER AND SHORTER TASK THAN I THOUGHT AT THE BEGINNING. BUT IF NOT FOR MY TEAM STEPPING UP IT WOULD HAVE BEEN MUCH MORE ARDUOUS AND I MAY NOT HAVE HAD THE FORTITUDE TO FINISH. SO THANK YOU PJ AND BA! THE LAST CHAPTER IS QUITE LONG (40 PAGES) BUT WE'VE ALREADY STARTED ON IT SO HOPEFULLY WE'LL GET IT OUT IN A REASONABLE TIME. IF YOU ENJOYED THE SERIES, PLEASE CONSIDER BUYING THE ORIGINALS TO SUPPORT THE AUTHOR.

REHOSTING POLICY: I DON'T CARE ABOUT STUFF LIKE THAT SO FEEL FREE TO RESIZE THIS OR PUT IT ANYWHERE. THE ORIGINAL IS ON BATOTO. JUST DON'T REMOVE THIS PAGE OR CLAIM IT AS YOUR OWN WORK. THANKS!

TRANSLATOR: PLUMJUICE
REDRAWER: BLACK-AGEHA